

84 JUL 27 1945

# The American RECORD GUIDE

formerly The American Music Lover



*Edited by*

**PETER HUGH REED**

July, 1945 • VOL. XI, No. 11.

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## THE AMERICAN RECORD GUIDE

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PELHAM 65, N. Y.

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## Editorial Notes

In our review of the Kipnis set of *Boris Godounoff* we mentioned Vanni-Marcoux as a remarkable portrayor of this role. We did not know that he sang the part in this country. Mr. Paul Chandler Hume writes: "Vanni-Marcoux followed Chaliapin and sang Boris in Chicago a number of times in the late 1920s, with great effect. His acting had the benefit of a polish and sense of restraint which in no way reduced the total impact of the opera and which seemed at times even more impressive than Chaliapin's gigantic portrayal. The variety of color with which Vanni-Marcoux invested his voice was a brilliant demonstration of the potentialities of a voice which was not a great one when viewed from the purely vocal standpoint.

"His other roles in Chicago, where he sang for a number of seasons, included a Goloud which could not be improved upon; a Scarpia which was eminently successful for its brilliant acting and his artistic conception of the meaning of the 'veristic' school of opera. His Don Quichotte, in the Massenet opera with Mary Garden who (also sang *Mélisande*), and his Athanael in the Garden *Thais*, as well as other roles, were all distinguished by his patrician style. It is fortunate for those who like to hear more than one interpretation of such works as *Boris* that Vanni-Marcoux did sing the role in America. Where Chaliapin was stupendous, Vanni-Marcoux was deeply moving; where Chaliapin could unleash the storm of his voice, Vanni-Marcoux used voice at his command with perfection of nuance to project the depth of feeling in the role. They were both marvelous conceptions, one more spontaneous, the other more per-

fectly studied, prepared and presented." We could not have put into words better the qualities that distinguished these two great singing actors.

Further information on Vanni-Marcoux's Boris comes from a former Bostonian, the Rev. H. Mason Palmer of Valhalla, N. Y. Father Palmer visited us this past month and listened with great enthusiasm to the Vanni-Marcoux recordings in our collection. He says that this singer was also heard in Boston in the role. As he recalls it, the whole opera was sung by the Boston Opera Co. in French, since this was the language employed by Vanni-Marcoux. Curiously, the French language does not vitiate the melodic lines as does Italian.

Recalling notable performances of Boris brings to mind those that Adamo Didur gave at the Metropolitan in the days before Chaliapin. Didur was a convincing actor, and though he sang in Italian his portrayal was made more telling by the darkness and rich resonance of his voice. But once Chaliapin took over, his enormous personality and prodigious voice caused opera-goers to forget—unfairly, in our estimation — the performances of Didur.

\* \* \*

From somewhere in China comes interesting information on the quest of our soldiers for music. Pfc. Rudy Feichtner writes us as follows: "I couldn't give you an address to send the *ARG* until now, for it is only belatedly that a degree of comparative permanency has been achieved in the fortune of my battalion. Up until a few weeks ago, the dominating motif was 'Pack up your duffle and hop in a truck'. That has changed now to 'Get

yourselves foot lookers, boys, you'll be here a long time'. Before you form any misconception, I should like to point out that the noises of battle are hundreds of miles from us, and therefore not likely to drown out the sounds emanating from a phonograph speaker. There is ample time here to pursue music, and happily, our own local Red Cross furnishes the best means to this end. There is a sizable collection of records, mostly HMV pressings, which struck me as being strange since the English only accompanied us as far as the Burmese border. However, I didn't reckon with the Air Transport Command which has been flying the 'Hump' here for the past three years, giving it plenty of time to establish the right connections. You can perhaps guess what these records mean to a lot of GIs so far from home and places where music is consistently presented.

"When I was stationed in Essam, prior to leaving for China, I was privileged to listen to recorded concerts at which the contributions were preponderantly English. Thus many of us were introduced to HMV pressings, on which we had heard so much favorable comment back in the States. After listening to many, we would like to add our own unstinting praise of their high quality. The one drawback to perfect record reproduction which now exists is the means of amplification and the type of tone-arm being used. Both harken back to the old days of the 'Morning Glory' horn, and neither does justice to what is contained in the grooves. However, a signal outfit like ours does not lack for technicians to remedy this situation, and in short order we expect to install a crystal pickup and secure amplification through one of the many fine G.I.

radios distributed throughout the area.

"One of my friends here is a musicologist, and his presence will lend an authoritative air to the recorded programs planned for the future. Hitherto, anyone close to the record cabinet put on the program, and the resultant atrocities made many an initiate writhe in discomfort. Side 2 of the *Dance of the Hours* would be billed as 'now we play the second movement of this work', and the names of Chopin, Smetana and Tchaikovsky were thoroughly butchered.

"My friend's erudition stops short of jazz. I am planning a program of Duke Ellington numbers ranging from 1927 up until the present, and hope to make of it an affair 'a la Carnegie Hall'. The Duke's music is not something your toes to, but worthy of serious study."

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Sgt. William J. Hennig, writing from the Philippines, rejoices at the restoration of the Manila Symphony Society. He says: "Let me contribute to the many accounts of wartime music in strange places. The first concert of the Manila Symphony Society was held late in May. This concert, which presented Dvorak's *New World Symphony* and Beethoven's *Eroica*, was given amid the shell-like ruins of one of Manila's old churches. In regard to the prices of the tickets, these were P5, P4, and P2. The 'P' means peso, and one is equivalent to the American half-dollar. The second regular symphony concert of the Manila Symphony Society took place on June 14, at the Rex Theatre in Ongpin St. The program, directed by the Society leader Dr. Herbert Zipper, in-

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Published by THE AMERICAN RECORD GUIDE, General Offices: 115 Reed Ave., Pelham, N. Y.

\* Peter Hugh Reed, Editor; Philip Miller (in service), Harold C. Schonberg (in service), Associated Editors; Paul Girard, Circulation Manager; Julius J. Spector, Art Editor.

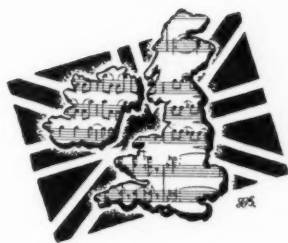
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Reentered as second class matter November 7, 1944, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.



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## LONDON NOTES -- MEN AND MUSIC

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By Cpl. Jerome Pastene

American record collectors, I know, are deeply interested in the English orchestras with which they are familiar on record labels, especially in the degree to which the war has affected them. The most evident difference I have noted between these orchestras and our native organizations is the one of size. The average English orchestra, as typified by the London Philharmonic and Symphony Orchestras and the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, all of which I have heard, appears to consist of approximately 65 to 75 musicians, as opposed to the much larger size of our first-line groups. Even in the performance of so richly scored a work as Wagner's *Parsifal*, with its demands for multiple woods and brass, the London Philharmonic did not seem to number in excess of 90 men. I understand that this was true even before the war, when the armed forces had not yet made their cut into the number of available musicians in the country.

It is also apparent that English orchestras have not sustained that standard of excellence which they boasted in 1939, and while some of the reasons for this are understandable, others are not. There seemed to be, in every concert I heard, a lassitude on the part of the musicians which was reflected in lack-lustre playing

that had nothing to do with the inroads of war.

The Liverpool Philharmonic, which is little known to American music-lovers, has more fine soloists in its ranks than any other orchestral body in England (notably Reginald Kell, Henry Holst, and Anthony Pini), and the finest playing I have heard in this country has come from this group, under Dr. Malcom Sargent. The London Symphony, playing under too many conductors, has perhaps suffered less change in personnel than others in this war; it remains, as I have always found it on records, an adequate and satisfactory but never exciting body of players.

But the real cause for complaint lies in the pallid sameness of London programs, in a city that offers, at times, some six orchestral concerts a week. To attempt to convey any idea of the monotonous diet of overworked "standards" (especially in the concerto repertory) is impossible.

Of the sundry musical experiences I had while in London this past winter, one of the most interesting was the broadcast I attended one Sunday morning at Broadcast House, the home of the British Broadcasting Co. The program was *Music Magazine*, a weekly feature directed and narrated by Alec Robertson, well-known



English musicologist and a staff member of *The Gramophone*.

#### A Radio Fortress

Entering Broadcast House, I found myself in a large antechamber which had been divided into two halves by a barbed-wire fence reaching from floor to ceiling. Interviewed at a desk, I was given a pass which was signed and countersigned, and was met by Mr. Robertson at the gate. Then, and only then, was I allowed to enter past the armed sentry who stood guard. Venturing on into the building, I found that almost every door had been removed and replaced by a thick sheet of steel, in which had been cut an aperture just large enough for one man to crawl through without too great a loss of dignity. I was told that during the terrible days of 1940, when invasion seemed inevitable, and even for months later, armed guards with fixed bayonets were stationed at every door and passage in the building. Anti-aircraft weapons were mounted on the roof, and the entire building had been sandbagged and reinforced with concrete buttresses against bombardment, the windows sheeted over with steel. Thus the impression of being a ship's prow which Broadcast House originally suggested to anyone approaching across Langham Place from Upper Regent Street, because of its thin, knifelike shape, has now been emphasized, and the suggestion continued within, the barren walls and the metal sheeting over the doors reminding one of nothing so much as the watertight compartments of a vessel.

I sat in the control room high above the studio during most of the broadcast, on which Dino Borgioli, the Italian tenor, was appearing as guest of honor. From here I could look down upon most of the participants, and, with a turn of the head, see the turntables on which the recordings are played. The phonograph equipment in this room, in fact, completely drew my attention away from the broadcast proceedings, but I still could not fail to be amazed by the perfection of timing and technique with which so comparatively unimportant a broadcast (early Sunday morning) was transmitted. The very

sound engineers were evidently wholeheartedly concerned with the musical qualities involved, in a manner and to a degree that would be unlikely in America save for a few great concert broadcasts such as the Philharmonic or Metropolitan.

The record playback equipment was complete to a degree I had never previously seen in America, in any studio. Instead of the conventional pickup mounting, in which the crystal or magnet is mounted upon an arm that swings in an arc across the record, these machines are mounted in such a way that the arm, at its base, slides along a support mounted at right angles to it. This support is so calibrated that it is possible to set the pickup down automatically into any predetermined groove, thereby not only effecting an unbroken presentation of a recorded symphony, but also playing just a fragment or an excerpt from a recording with a minimum of work and effort. In such a manner, I have seen the operator of those tables select at will a single line from a Shakespearean play!

#### Abbey Road

Gramophiles will easily understand the excitement and curiosity I felt when I visited the famous Abbey Road studios where so many of England's great recordings have been made. There, thanks to Cecil Pollard, Editor of *The Gramophone*. I met Walter Legge, whose position in British recording is somewhat similar to the one held in America by Godard Lieberson, and yet considerably more extensive, since he controls the classical output of every British record manufacturer, except Decca; the rest are closely interwoven in one big combine known as E. M. I. I was amused to find that sometimes recordings are made without any foreknowledge of the label on which they will eventually be issued, so that they may subsequently be released on either HMV, Columbia, Parlophone, or any of the affiliated British labels.

The entrance to the Abbey Road studios, north of London's West End, is completely deceptive. The front is that of a small, private house, wedged between two blocks of residential flats, and the approaching

visitor consequently fails to notice the enormous building stretching away behind it which houses the studios proper. This impression is sustained upon entering the small, late-Victorian central hall, with its porter's lodge in the center; the old porter, a character himself, is known by his first name to all regular callers.

#### Souvenirs of the Past

Along the old, half-panelled, half-papered walls hang autographed photographs of the great singers and soloists of a by-gone era of recording: Melba, Caruso, Chaliapin, Kreisler, and others equally hallowed. About this hallway are ringed the offices, Conference Room (with two large HMV instruments on which new recordings are auditioned), and Walter Legge's office. It is only after one passes through the double doors at the rear of this hallway that the size of the building is revealed. Here, too, one seems to step, as it were, from the old era of acoustical recording to the modern one of electrical recording, for here the construction is as up to date as possible.

There are studios here for every purpose, from the smaller halls which are used in the recordings of soloists such as Benno Moiseivitch, Solomon, Maggie Teyte and Eileen Joyce, through the larger halls used for recording chamber music groups such as the Busch or Barbirolli Chamber Orchestras, England's dance orchestras, or the Philharmonia Quartet, to the enormous studio used for recording all of England's great orchestras (they also record on occasion in a concert hall). This last studio is virtually a concert-hall, with its banked tiers for the orchestra at the one end, organ loft built into the side, and the ample floor space where might be seated a thousand people. In none of these rooms does one find the sort of barren functional design expected of a recording studio that is never seen by the public. The walls are panelled in fine woods, inlaid in patterns, alternating with draperies, the whole designed, of course, to effect the finest acoustical results. Walter Legge told me that the sound engineers are always making changes in the finish of the rooms, experimenting with all the acoustical possibilities that afford.

The supreme achievement of British recording in these war years, has been in chamber music. Walter Legge played for me some of the test-pressings by the Philharmonia Quartet and other groups. I was most taken with the recording of the Beethoven *Clarinet Trio* by Denis Matthews (piano), Reginald Kell (clarinet) and Anthony Pini ('cello). I could do nothing but marvel not only at the perfect integration and spirit of the players, but at the suave and yet crystal-clear quality of the recording. In my estimation, there is not a single chamber-music recording made in the United States which can eclipse these. I can immediately envision American recording engineers rising in wrath and hurling statistics of decibels and cycles per second at me. Away with them! Statistics mean nothing; to the musicians it is what impinges upon the ear that means everything. Fine as our recordings of the Rubinstein-Heifetz-Feuerman Trio are, they have a slight edginess which is missing in these British recordings, without at the same time creating any greater illusion of clarity and realism.

#### On Performances

But the quality of recording in these chamber-music discs pales beside the quality of performance. How is it possible that, in the Philharmonia Quartet, four excellent but not exceptional musicians (not in the Heifetz or Feuermann class, that is) can achieve the complete and absolute unity required for great chamber-music performance? Mr. Legge supplied the answer — at the same time a challenge, a lesson, and a reproach to the tactics and attitude of those charged with the handling and recording of artists in our country. Mr. Legge explained that for each work recorded, he had personally spent hours (sometimes days) with each instrumentalist. The four players and Mr. Legge then went over each page of the work, playing, checking, discussing every measure, every tempo marking, every nuance and shading, until convinced that they were not violating any marking of the composer, or doing so only when all five participants were completely in ac-

cord that the questionable marking was contrary to the true intention of the composer. And not until this spirit of unanimity had been reached were any sides cut. Nor was this an end to the painstaking labor. For the 10 sides required for one recording, a total of no less than 154 sides were cut!

When such careful methods of recording are considered, it is not difficult to understand why the performances and recording that come out of England maintain so high a standard. Although I saw very little of the mechanical end of recording during this visit, the infinite pains that I saw taken at every hand gave reason to believe (even had ears not given proof) that every care is taken and that *experiments remain in the laboratory, where they belong.*

#### A Beecham Recording Session

I was lucky to be able to attend a recording session in the big recording studios. Sir Thomas Beecham was recording with the London Philharmonic Orchestra; the work in question was one that record collectors will welcome, especially under Sir Thomas' sensitive touch — the first recording of the Schubert *Symphony No. 6*. (Beecham's new recordings, incidentally, will be issued on HMV in England, Victor in America.) I later listened to tests of these recordings made at a previous session (Sir Thomas is apparently not pleased with the orchestra's performance), and also to tests of what, from the single side I heard, part of the *Scherzo*, promises to be a superb recording of the Elgar *Second Symphony*. Although I have never been fond of Elgar (as a result of the little available in American catalogues). I was frankly impressed with this side and, if the rest of the symphony sustains this high level of imagination and inspiration, hope it will have American issue. Owing in part to a lively correspondence that I have maintained with English record collectors, I have been attracted to some of Elgar's music and am looking forward to the time when some English orchestra will give me a chance to hear the best of his works.

Later, with Walter Legge and Cecil Polard, I visited the offices of ENSA in the Drury Lane Theatre. ENSA is a British government agency responsible for a steady stream of entertainment of all types, in colossal proportions, for the forces and war workers. Mr. Legge is in charge of the classical repertory and concert artists; his wife, Nancy Evans, a singer widely admired in England, appears frequently in ENSA concerts. The full scope of these concerts will only be realized when it is understood that it is a habitual thing for ENSA to book the London Symphony or Liverpool Philharmonic, complete with all their instruments, to small, out of the way centers where large bodies of troops are gathered. Nor are the standards of these concerts lower than they would be for a London audience; in Salisbury recently, the London Symphony gave a program that included a Beethoven Symphony and Butterworth's *A Shropshire Lad Rhapsody*. This concert was given in the the Cathedral, the only building in the town large enough for it; it was followed by a Beethoven Festival from which I will mention, at random, three concerts: a concert of chamber music by the Philharmonia Quartet, including the *Quartets Opp. 59, No. 1, 127, and 135*, a concert performance of *Fidelio* with Mr. Legge doing the narration to supply continuity between the scenes, and a recital by Myra Hess of three sonatas, including the *Appassionata*. The highlight of my visit to Mr. Legge's ENSA headquarters occurred when, sympathetic to my complaint that our camp was well provided with vaudeville acts but had been slighted by classical artists, Mr. Legge telephoned to Solomon, England's greatest concert pianist, and arranged on the spot for him to appear in our camp in February.

I should not like to leave the subject of English recordings without mention of a few which I have heard recently, and which I hope will eventually obtain American release. Outstanding among these, of course, is the Solomon-Holst-Pini performance of the Beethoven *Archduke Trio*, a superlative interpretation and recording which ought to appear in America despite

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## A SURVEY OF CHAMBER MUSIC

By Peter Hugh Reed

### Bach's Sons

It was Bach's sons and their contemporaries who effected the change toward the "classical" style and paved the way for the music of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. The keyboard during this period became a more important factor in ensemble, and the beginnings of true partnership between two players came into existence. The basso continuo, from which the performer at the keyboard had been required to perform *ad libitum*, translating the harmonies indicated at sight into a texture enhanced by various contrapuntal devices, gradually gave way to written-out accompaniments which were obviously generated from the characteristics of the keyboard instrument. With the death of Bach and Handel, the polyphonic style and the age of the basso continuo terminated. There followed a transition period until Haydn and Mozart established the classical style.

Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach was one of the most significant musicians of his time. To him belongs the credit for the develop-

ment of the sonata form as we know it today; it was he who introduced the second subject in the opening movement. His brother, Johann Christian, added other features. The latter's style was more homophonic and melodic than Philipp Emanuel's.

Prior to the time of Bach's sons, the so-called sonata was largely polyphonic in style. Haydn, who once called Philipp Emanuel his teacher, developed the new sonata form and later Mozart gave it regularity. The classical sonata form did away with the several dance movements employed in the suite, and brought into existence a first movement which made more complicated yet entirely logical use of the melodic material conceived by the composer. In this opening movement, the form of which Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven found so useful that they even employed it in other movements, there were two contrasting sections at the beginning, usually referred to as first and second subjects. These subjects were not necessarily limited to a single theme but sometimes comprised several themes drawn together.

After subjects are stated, usually with a transition between them, there follows a section in which the composer ingeniously develops the preceding material. The last part of the movement is known as the recapitulation and is largely a repetition of the opening section. At the end of the recapitulation there is sometimes an extension or coda.

The following discussion of Bach's sons has been arranged chronologically and not from the standpoint of their importance.

#### W. F. Bach

*Wilhelm Friedemann Bach* (1710-1784) was Johann Sebastian's eldest and most gifted son. It seems strange that he, who is said to have inherited the greatest portion of his father's genius, should have been an unstable character, who was unable or unwilling to develop his rich gifts. His church compositions reveal him to have been a forceful writer, and his chamber music shows a fluency and charm that could have been more advantageously exploited. He was organist at Dresden and later at Halle. After 1764, his dissipation brought him dishonor and impoverishment.

Not a great deal of Wilhelm Friedemann's chamber has come down to us in published scores, yet he wrote a number of sonatas for flute and harpsichord, and some duets for flute and viola.

Wilhelm was a talented keyboard performer, and in his last years he made a slender livelihood giving organ recitals. Contemporaries described his playing as impressive. One can readily understand the assertion that his harpsichord playing was "elegant, delicate and agreeable" upon listening to the only example of his chamber music on records—the *Sonata in C minor*, played by William Primrose (viola) and Yella Pessl (harpsichord) (Victor set 807). The final *allegro scherzando* in particular would seem to have been made to exploit the composer's own talent at the clavier. The sonata has been described as a virtual "fantasia concertante," since "much of the musical material consists of alternating cadenzas displaying the virtuosity of both instruments." The manuscript of this work was discovered by Miss Pessl in the Library of Congress.

Its instrumentation was not specifically indicated, but Miss Pessl feels it "can only be performed by the combination of harpsichord and viola, since there is no other instrument in the given range, on which the broken chords and passages of the alto part can be played." I am not in agreement with those who profess that this work possesses little interest. The style of writing is not far removed from that which Johann Sebastian employed in his fantasias. To be sure, its main purpose seems to be display, but there is a melancholy note to the opening *Adagio e mesto* which is arresting; the thematic material recalls the composer's father, although it is not as thoughtfully or as effectively worked out as it would have been by the great Johann Sebastian. The *Allegro non troppo*, which follows, owns a thematic fluency which is both agreeable and appealing. The work grows on one, perhaps as much for the fine playing of the performers as for the intrinsic value of the music. The mellow beauty of Primrose's viola and his masterly technical finish is highly appreciable. Miss Pessl gives him excellent cooperation and on her own contributes some stimulatingly fleet-fingered playing. The recording is satisfactory, despite the fact that the viola is favored.

#### C. P. E. Bach

C. P. E. Bach (1714-1788) was the third son (second surviving) of Johann Sebastian. His style differed from his father's; it was more elegantly facile and given to the use of harmonic contrasts. He was thoroughly trained in music by his father, and later further educated at Leipzig and Frankfurt. In 1746 he was appointed *Kammermusicus* (chamber musician) to Frederick the Great (who played the flute), a post he held for eleven years. At the death of Telemann in 1767, he became the cantor at Hamburg, where he spent the rest of his life. As a keyboard virtuoso he occupied a position second to none in his day. His instruction book, *The True Manner of Playing the Clavier*, was the first comprehensive text-book of keyboard technique. It exerted an enormous influence.

Philipp Emanuel was an important con-

tributor to the evolution of the sonata, for he was one of the first to employ the rudimentary classical sonata-form. The originality of his keyboard sonatas brought him wide recognition, and it was through the study of some of these about 1750 that Haydn is said to have got his impetus. His finest works are undeniably his keyboard compositions (several of which are fortunately available on records), but he also wrote some 50 concertos, several settings of the *Passion*, a large number of church cantatas, and three symphonies. Although his orchestral works have been criticized for suggestions of lack of ease in the medium, and for evidencing little or no sympathy for the then new methods of instrumental treatment, his chamber music reveals a fine sense of balance in design and a truly facile charm. In his day, his concertos were undoubtedly performed by a small group and regarded as chamber music. Among his published chamber works are sonatas for flute, gamba, and violin with clavier, and at least one suite. This latter work, said to have been originally a quartet for viols, is numbered by some among the composer's concertos. It has been arranged for viols and harpsichord by Henri Casadesus of the French Society for Ancient Instruments, and in this arrangement performed by Ben Stad's American Society of Ancient Instruments on Victor discs 1714/15 and 8720.

#### The Steinberg Arrangement

This work is probably most familiar to musical listeners in the orchestral transcription made by Maximilian Steinberg, for Koussevitzky has long featured it in his Boston Symphony programs and has also recorded it (Victor set 559). There is much to be said in favor of both versions, for as one musician friend of mine says such music as this travels without damage from one musical medium to another, and with no disappointment to the listener. The sturdy and vigorous character of the opening *Allegro moderato* is well suited to Steinberg's treatment, but the graciousness of the thematic material is better served by the old-instrument ensemble. The crown of the work is the wonderfully

Beautiful *Andante lento molto*; this may be said to be one long-breathed melody from beginning to end, accompanied by warmly sentient harmonies. The arrangement for old instruments preserves the intimate beauty of the music better than the orchestral version, in which an English horn obtrudes a decidedly alien color. The final *Allegretto* fares well in both versions, but its lighthearted charm is better substantiated in the Stad recording.

#### J. C. F. Bach

Johann Christoph Friedrich Bach (1732-1795), eldest surviving son of Johann Sebastian and Anna Magdalena, studied law at first, but like so many of his illustrious family turned toward music. He too was highly regarded as a harpsichordist. In 1750, he was chamber musician at Bueckeburg to the Duke, and later he was appointed court conductor. He spent most of his life in service. His instrumental works, which include concertos, trios, quartets and symphonies, have been described as not "unworthy to stand beside those of Haydn" (Terry). That his chamber music owns distinctive qualities is borne out by the two works that have found their way to records—the *Trio No. 2 in C minor*, for harpsichord, violin and flute, played by J. Hooreman, H. Mikulaschek, and J. Nada (Columbia disc 68210-D), and the *Quartet No. 1 in E flat major*, played by the Perolé String Quartet (Musicraft disc 1003).

The *Trio* is a wholly delightful little composition, comprising two movements: a delicately expressive opening *Andante*, in which the soaring thematic material is appropriately voiced by the tonal purity of the flute and the elegance of the violin, and a Rondo in which the sprightly interplay of melodies remains ever enjoyable.

The *Quartet* is an equally ingratiating opus, which deserves to be heard oftener in concert. Amateur groups will do well to look the score up; the instrumental texture is far more pliable than that of many well known works by Haydn. I am in wholehearted agreement with Philip Miller, who in reviewing this quartet in May 1937 said: "For grace it need offer no

apology to Mozart; and the sheer beauty of the weaving parts in the slow movement recalls certain passages in Johann Sebastian himself."

On the evidence of these two works, one hopes that others by his neglected composer will be reproduced in the future. Six quartets of Johann Christoph are published as are some sonatas for flute and clavier (which in their original form were quartets for flute, violin, viola and continuo). Undoubtedly, the violin could be substituted for the flute in the performance of the latter works.

A further example of Johann Christoph's quartet writing is provided on French Columbia disc LFX-213. This is an *Allegro moderato* from his *Quartet No. 4*; it is played by the Calvet Quartet as an encore on the odd side of that ensemble's recording of the Debussy *Quartet*.

#### J. C. Bach

*Johann Christian Bach* (1735-1782), generally called the "London Bach," since in his latter years he was a resident of London and the music-master in the royal family, was the youngest son of Johann Sebastian. He was the only member of the Bach family who was closely associated with the new homophonic, melodic style of the period, and was highly respected as an operatic and symphonic composer. He studied with Martini and others in Italy, and for a short time was organist at Milan. His music was almost purely Italianate in style. It is of interest to note that he embraced Roman Catholicism. Mozart came in contact with him in London and was considerably influenced by him.

Johann Christian was particularly applauded as an operatic composer; Burney tells us that upon the performance of his first opera in England (1763) "every judge of Music perceived the emanations of genius throughout the whole performance; but were chiefly struck with the richness of the harmony, the ingenious texture of the parts, and, above all, with the new and happy use he made of wind instruments: this being the first time that clarinets had admission to our opera orchestra."

This composer's contribution to the

sonata form was of marked value, especially in the field of the symphony and of chamber music. He gave dramatic stress to transitional material and provided new paths for shifting tonalities. In his chamber music proper, his writing for the clavier was not of prime importance, owing to the fact that although a proficient performer in his youth his neglect of the instrument during his Italian sojourn limited his technical ability. Burney tells us that "in the sonatas and concertos, which he composed for his own playing, when his hand was feeble, or likely to tire, he diverted the attention of the audience to some other instrument." Fortunately, he had many excellent musicians, with whom he was heard in company, to write for. Some of his concertos were composed for small groups, and consequently belong in this survey of chamber music.

Johann Christian is regarded by some writers as a superficial genius or a talented composer of small scope. Much has been read into his own remark about his brother Philip Emanuel and himself. When asked to state the essential difference between them, he laughingly replied: "My brother lives to compose, while I compose to live." Johann Christian unquestionably fulfilled his artistic aims to suit himself; if he be regarded today as a lesser master, this does not mean that he lacked a certain distinction and worth. It is, as has been said, unfair to regard his art merely as a stepping stone for Haydn and Mozart.

#### Works Recorded

There are three definite chamber compositions of J. C. Bach on records: the *Quintet No. 6 in D major*, played by G. Cunelle (flute), L. Gromer (oboe), J. Fournier (violin), P. Villain (viola), and P. Fournier (cello) (Anthologie Sonore disc 50); the *Quartet in C major, Opus 8, No. 1*, for flute and strings, played by the Oxford Ensemble (Musicraft disc 1039); and the *Sonata in G major, Opus 16, No. 2*, played by Claude Jean Chiasson (harpsichord) and Verne Q. Powell (flute) (Technichord disc 1538). The recorded concertos, that fit into the chamber category are the *Concerto in E flat, Opus 7, No. 5*, played by Ralph Kirkpatrick

(harpsichord) and String Trio (Musicraft set 38), and the *Concerto in G major, Opus 7, No. 6*, played by Marguerite Roesgen-Champion (harpsichord) and String Trio (Victor discs 4441/42).

The most delightful of the three chamber works remains, in my estimation, the quintet, not alone because of the excellence of the performance but because of its gratifying writing for the wind instruments. To preserve its limpidity, the harpsichord part was omitted in this performance. The manner in which Bach turns from the oboe to the flute in the sweetly gentle *Andante* is most expressive. The quintet is in three movements: a genial and friendly opening *Allegro*, deceiving in its unpretentiousness, the *Andante* already mentioned, and an irresistibly flowing finale. Here, as Curt Sachs has remarked, is a magnificent opus, ever enjoyable in performance.

#### A Pleasant Work

The sonata is one of delicacy and grace; it is made up of two movements: a sprightly *Allegretto* and a poetic, but untroubled, *Andante grazioso*. The playing is smoothly contrived, with an effortlessness and a simplicity that are admirable. The naturalness of the recording, which is unusually well balanced, adds to one's enjoyment of the music. The two sonatas that comprise Bach's Opus 16 are listed as works for the violin and clavier, but it is more than likely that these were intended, as was customary in the 18th century, for performance on the violin or flute. After all, the melodic line is no more definitely suited to the violin than to flute. Amateurs will find these works worth acquiring; they pose no problems other than a technical fluency.

The quartet, for flute and strings, is not on a level with the other works; the well-ordered flow of the music is too reflective of the polite manner of the period. One suspects that this music was written to order to please the aristocrats of the composer's time. There is neither the contrast here that is found in the quintet nor the poetic beauty of the sonata. The performance is creditably accomplished, and the recorders have done justice to the players.

The *Concerto in E flat*, although rather dully recorded, is of great interest. It sounds a deeper note of expression than the *Concerto in G major* or any of the above chamber works. One is reminded by the character of the music that Johann Christian influenced Mozart. Here, Bach is concerned not merely with the *style galant*, in which grace and charm abound, but rather with an expression of a more sombre emotion. The opening movement possesses an underlying seriousness, which Kirkpatrick wisely stresses; the music is reminiscent in part of old Johann Sebastian. The slow movement stems from the Italian aria, facile and graceful; and the finale is a brilliant show piece. The work is well played in the recording, Kirkpatrick's performance in particular showing fine comprehension of and feeling for the score. He, of course, conducts from the keyboard in the manner of Bach's day. The clarity of the harpsichordist's style and the sentient intimacy of his playing are attributes all too seldom conveyed on records; the string ensemble under his direction is competent. The reproduction should have been more resonant, but it does justice to the players nevertheless.

The above work and the *Concerto in G major*, in their respective recordings, actually belong at the crossroads where chamber music and the concerto meet; although titled concertos, and formally constructed as such (hence playable with larger ensembles since the strings can be multiplied, as they probably were on occasion in Bach's time), they really emerge as chamber music when heard in quartet form. Judged by any musical standard the *G major* is a beautiful work. Although the musical interest is well sustained in all three movements, the *Andante* is especially appealing for its poetic grace and charm, a happy manifestation of the *style galant*. There are several short cuts in the recording, undisturbing, however, to the flow of the music. The performance is capably realized, and the recording is satisfactory.

J. C. Bach wrote a number of string quartets, three of which come down to us in published editions. They will repay investigation by amateurs.

(To be Continued)



## EDITORIAL NOTES

(Continued from page 274)

cluded Brahms' *First Symphony*; Beethoven's *Violin Concerto*, Basilio Manalo, soloist; Weinberger's *Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree*; and the Waltzes from Strauss' *Rosenkavalier*. I cannot give you any critical appraisal of that concert, nor have I seen any in print. Being engaged with the 1st Cavalry Division in Southern Luzon, I was unable to attend the concert. It is still too early in the Liberation for that luxury.

"Records here are mostly pre-war or V-Discs, with emphasis on the popular. But I have seen many Australian labels. So here's one guy who hopes that some day not too far off he can return to the Yank world of music and the old record collection."

\* \* \*

Our article on *Needles, Reproduction and Scratch* in the May issue has brought us a great deal of gratifying correspondence, including some from men in the sound field. One letter from a physicist in Ohio, Mr. Matthew T. Jones, supplies us with more valued and badly needed data on needles; he has made a wider range of tests than any other person we have been in touch with, and his findings will be reported here in due course.

A couple of readers were of the opinion that Mr. Julian and Mr. Mercer were misinformed on non-metallic needles. We believe that Mr. Jones' findings about thorn needles will prove of value to those who continue to use these despite the warnings of sound men. It should be pointed out that such damage as a thorn needle does to a record is negligible when compared the damage that a worn-pointed steel or jewel does. However, the damage that the thorn does is cumulative, and one is not aware that damage is being done until it is too late. The loss of frequencies with a thorn is something of which we have not previously spoken, but these and other facts will be brought out in another needle article to be printed in an early issue.

Many readers will rejoice with us in seeing the initials H.C.S. on two reviews this month. 1st Lt. Harold C. Schonberg, our former assistant editor, returned recently from Europe. At present, he is recuperating in a hospital in New Jersey from a leg injury received in line of duty several weeks before Germany surrendered. While Lt. Schonberg is around, we hope he will find time to do other reviews for us.

## LONDON NOTES

(Continued from page 278)

the admirable Rubinstein-Heifetz-Feuermann reading. There is a unanimity of conception in this recording which I do not recall to a like degree in the American set. I should also like to see American issues of the Beethoven *Clarinet Trio* (Matthews-Kell-Pini); the Schubert *Death and the Maiden Quartet* by the Philharmonia Quartet (a performance that is far above the Busch recording both artistically and technically, and that I think superior even to the old Budapest set which I have treasured until now), and the Beethoven *Horn Sonata, Op. 17*, by Dennis Brain (son of the famous Aubrey) and Denis Matthews. The recent American issue of Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast* gives me cause to hope that, despite the lifting of the recording ban and the flood of recordings by American artists which it presages, we may have soon in domestic lists some of these superb British performances.

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Record Guide



## FROM DUET TO SEXTET

By Stephen Fassett

### PART 2

The first Red Seal duet issued by Victor in 1907 was *Vivra contende il giubilo* from *Il Trovatore*, rousingly sung by Celestina Boninsegna and Francesco Cigada on a ten-inch disc (91071). Boninsegna, whom I discussed briefly in the March 1944 number of this magazine, was in fine form when this record was made. Her singing is clean-cut, brilliant and full of fire. Judging from this duet and from her various *Trovatore* solos, she must have been an ideal Leonora. Cigada (1880) is known to collectors as a prolific recording baritone who appeared on both black label and red label Victor discs. He was the Tonio of an early semi-complete *I Pagliacci* that was recorded in 1907 under the personal supervision of the composer. Although Cigada never had a reputation equal to Boninsegna's, he proves himself an effective partner, singing di Luna's phrases with all the impetuosity they demand. Like so many products of the Italian studios, this disc conveys much of the excitement of an actual performance.

In May 1907, Victor released the first of its four recordings of the *Rigoletto* Quartet starring Caruso. His companions in this version (96000 or 10011) were Bessie Abott, Louise Homer and Antonio

Scotti. A remarkably good balance among the four voices was obtained, but surely the most memorable feature of the performance is Caruso's superb singing, particularly in the opening phrases. In none of the later recordings of the Quartet was he able to surpass the standard he set for himself in this first one.

Another bright spot on Victor's May list was the first of the Farrar-Homer duets, *Tutti i fior* from *Madame Butterfly* (89008). On February 11, 1907, both singers had taken part in the Metropolitan's first production of the Puccini opera. Cio-Cio-San had instantly become Farrar's most popular role. (During her 16 years with the Metropolitan company she was to sing it 95 times.) In this recording, the lovely dark-hued voices of the two American singers blended beautifully, for they shared a propensity for duet singing which Victor exploited effectively as the years went by.

Charles Dalmores (ARG, December 1944) and Marcel Journet (AML, June 1944) were also represented in the May list, singing *Je suis Escamillo* from *Carmen* (85114) and *Vision céleste* from *Faust* (85115). As was to be expected from two such admirable artists, the interpretations were first-rate; but the selections were not the melodious type of

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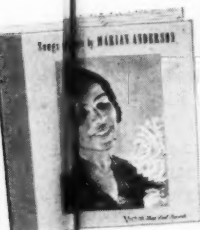
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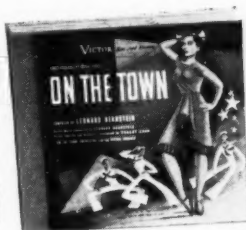
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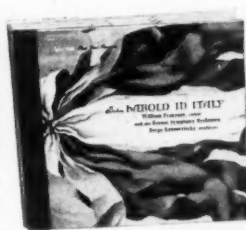
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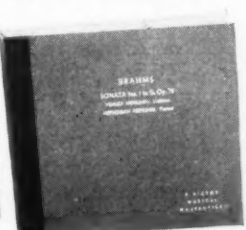
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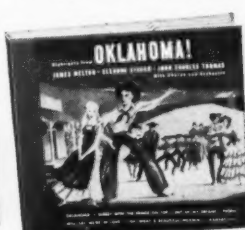
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# RCA VICTOR RED SEAL RECORDS



popular appeal and consequently the records did not sell well. Eventually, in fact, they became rare enough to be revived by The International Record Collector's Club—disc 179.

June 1907 was an exciting month for collectors of celebrity duets. With Mario Ancona (AML, July 1944), Caruso sang *Del tempio al limitar* from *I Pescatori di Perle* (89007 or 8036) and with Scotti Ab. Mimi, *tu piu* from *Bobème* (89006 or 8000), both of which immediately became and remained best sellers. Today *Del tempio al limitar* is the only example of Ancona's smooth, flowing baritone that can be easily found. However, the existence of electrical recordings of these duets, resplendently sung by Gigli and De Luca, undoubtedly has tended to dull the modern listener's desire to hear the older discs, fine though they are. Nevertheless the discriminating collector interested in good singing will want both old and new versions.

#### The Melba Duets

In June Victor also issued three duets featuring Melba. Two were with the incomparable French baritone, Charles Gili- bert (AML, August 1944). These were Bemberg's *Un ange est venue* (89012) and Blangini's *Per valli, per boschi* (89011). Neither composition is of consequence; Melba's voice sounds thin and distant; and the vocal honors belong to Gilbert. *Un ange est venue* must have been a favorite of Melba's, for with John Brownlee she recorded it again, in England, 19 years later (HMV-DB 987). (On the reverse she and Brownlee sing *Dite alla giovine* from *Traviata*.) The Melba-Gilbert duets are rarities in their original form, although for many years they were available on special order from England (HMV-DM 117).

The third of the 1907 Melba duets was *O soave fanciulla* from *Bobème* (95200), with Caruso as co-star. In spite of the fact that it was the most expensive duet recording in the entire Victor catalog, it achieved lasting popularity. Even at five dollars, a Melba-Caruso duet was sure to sell, the Victor company assumed, correctly as it proved. Yet these two voices

were never again combined on a record, to the regret of several generations of collectors who have valued this rendering of *Soave fanciulla* for its poignant restraint.

Another June release was the only record Maria Ancona and Marcel Journet ever made together, *Suoni la tromba* from *I Puritani* (Victor 88500 or HRS 1003). Both singers had opulent, freely produced voices and their individual tone colors blended perfectly in this recording. The performance is spirited, the reproduction excellent.

#### A Trio that Missed

The idea of having three such eminent vocalists as Emma Eames, Charles Dalmores and Pol Plançon record the *Faust Trio* was certainly a promising one. The choice of artists could hardly have been better. The role of Marguerite had long been closely associated with Eames' career, for when she was a student in Paris she had studied the part with Gounod himself and sung it countless times during her years at the Metropolitan. Plançon most famous operatic characterization was Me- phisto and according to many critics his performance has never been surpassed. Dalmores belonged to a younger generation of singers, but had already won an enviable reputation in the face of powerful competition. Faust was one of his most successful roles and patrons of the Manhattan Opera House rated it highly, considering it a more artistic portrayal than Caruso's. These three should have formed an ideal combination and perhaps they would have if they had been allowed, or obliged, to repeat their performance until a really satisfactory record had been made. At any rate, the final result was a disappointment. Even when reproduced by the best modern equipment, the recording is out of balance: Eames dominates to such an extent that the voices of Dalmores and Plançon cannot be heard effectively. Moreover, her tones are hard and un- yielding and her concluding high note is painfully flat. (Several of the successful Eames discs are recommended in the March 1939 and April 1944 issues of this magazine.) In fairness to the artists and



to the engineers, it should be explained that recording three powerful voices, all singing at a climatic fortissimo, was not an easy thing to do in the old days. On this occasion, for instance, Eames may have been placed too close to the recording apparatus, Dalmores and Plançon too far from it. The proper registering of high notes sung full voice was a major difficulty. In order to avoid "blasting," it was necessary to step back from the horn momentarily and singers who forgot this precaution might find themselves, just as they were getting set for a high note, suddenly jerked backwards with disastrous results. Making records in those days was an ordeal, and the singer could not always clearly hear the orchestra (Eames herself has said the orchestra more often than not sounded out of tune); hence, it is no wonder that under such trying circumstances success was not consistently achieved. As a matter of fact, the record in question was replaced three years later by the Caruso-Farrar-Journet version, which, of course, makes it something of a rarity.

(To be Continued)

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## BOOK REVIEW

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THE MUSICAL SCENE. By Virgil Thomson. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1945. 301 pp. Price \$3.00.

▲ The publishers refer to the author as "the profound and witty critic of the New York Herald Tribune." I have heard Mr. Thomson called "provocative" and "opinionated." His profundity cannot be denied, though more often than not it is concealed by commonsense and candor. Mr. Thomson's arrival in the New York field of journalistic criticism was not unlike a refreshing breeze in a torpid atmosphere. One reading the Tribune, month after month, year in and year out, must have found this immediately apparent. His predecessor, Lawrence Gilman, had pursued a widely different course.

After the purple and gold prose of Gilman, Thomson's frankness and forthrightness seemed to have a liveness and modernity which were welcome.

Mr. Thomson is a composer, so that he writes as a professional—one who knows music from the inside rather than the outside. There is a distinction: the non-professional writer on music tends to generalize, he does not talk knowingly of melodic content, of rhythmic subtleties, of tonal balance, of counterpoint and harmony. On performance, Mr. Thomson is especially good; he knows how music should sound and be played. His observation on the performance of 19th-century Romantic composers is a case in point; he contends that the criticism hurled at them today should be more often directed against the performers—it is the latter who are at fault. Mr. Thomson's likes and dislikes have earned for him the epithet "opinionated," but this is hardly deserved. Those who do not agree with him in his fondness for and support of French music might take into consideration that he got the major portion of his schooling in France. If his admiration for French music leads him to write more glowingly about it than he does about German or Russian music, this does not necessarily mean he is antithetical to the Germans and the Russians. Undoubtedly, he has his limitations, like any other mortal. His failure to speak of Prokofieff in the present book inclines one friend of mine to some unnecessary and wholly irrelevant criticism about this book.

There is musical wisdom in Thomson's writings and a type of wit born of discernment, indeed his style is generally entertaining. The book is a valuable reference work on the musical scene mainly around New York from the period between October 9, 1940, and July 23, 1944. The material has been arranged by subject rather than chronologically, which seems to have been a sensible procedure. The only trouble with a book of this kind is that one cannot read it at one sitting. Mr. Thomson's style in large doses, can be a bit overwhelming.

—James Norwood

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### Orchestra

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DEBUSSY: *Two Nocturnes — Nuages (Clouds) and Fêtes (Festivals)*; played by the Philadelphia Orchestra, direction of Eugene Ormandy. Columbia set X or MX-247, price \$2.50.

▲ Ormandy's performances of Debussy's familiar *Nocturnes* are simply and neatly done. He does not disturb the indirectness of suggestion in the composer's musical paintings. The delicacy and reserve of *Clouds* is beautifully conveyed by the fine solo playing and the guiding, yet self-effacing spirit of the conductor. One recalls what Debussy has said about this Nocturne: "The unchanging aspect of the sky, and the slow movement of the clouds dissolving in gray tints lightly touched with white." Others, like Stokowski, tend

to more pronounced coloration than Ormandy, with the result that the dream-like delicacy of the music is made too vivid for its own good. Columbia has succeeded in recording this mood music very well indeed; its pianissimo qualities are about as happily realized as present-day recording technique will allow. The listener should not turn this music up too high; to do so will spoil the mystic beauty of the work.

The dream illusion is also preserved by Ormandy in his performance of *Fêtes*. There is subtlety of shade and coloring in this performance, and one of the happiest realizations of the gradual approach of the spectral pageant on records. Perhaps there is room for more varied effects of light and color here, but one admires the way Ormandy handles the cumulative pulsation of the music. Stokowski in his performance of this music is concerned with tonal effects rather than with movement; not so Ormandy. The recording is satisfactorily contrived. —P. H. R.

GERSHWIN (arr. Bennett): *Porgy and Bess — A Symphonic Picture*; played by the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Fabien Sevitzky. Victor set M or DM-999, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ Basically, this so-called symphonic picture is nothing more or less than an operatic potpourri. However, as in the case of the "Scenario" from Kern's *Showboat*, Russell Bennett has shown his re-

markable abilities both as orchestrator and arranger. His arrangements are not like the old-fashioned medleys from operas which dominated the musical scene in grandmother's and even mother's day. The word "scenario," taken from the movie world, fits what he does very well indeed. Both radio and moving pictures have had to develop a continuity in music and story, and Bennett has quite evidently studied the results. The musical progression here is excellently contrived, better in many ways than in the *Show Boat* piece. It may be a moot question whether these operatic sequences of Bennett belong in the concert hall, but justification for such arrangements is hardly needed. For the tunes in both cases are good ones, tunes that we all know and admire, and hearing them dressed up in Sunday clothes does not diminish their qualities. Whether they are enhanced by such treatment remains controversial. I do not think that a symphony orchestra quite catches the full spirit of such music; its essentially popular elements are not always rendered with the right spirit. The jazz spirit in the concert hall never seems to have the unfettered character that sets it apart from all other music.

As fine as this symphonic arrangement is, it seems to me a little too long for its own good. It begins auspiciously and holds one's interest for about two-thirds of the way. *Summertime* and *Bess, You is my Woman Now* lend themselves well to symphonic treatment, but *I Got Plenty of Nuttin'* and *It Aint Necessarily So* do not. This, however, may be due in part to Sevitzy's feeling for and treatment of them; the basic jazz mood is not sufficiently evidenced. I believe Bennett would have done better to have used less material from *Porgy and Bess*, to have written a scenario not more than 16 minutes in length. However, this is not intended to say that his arranging work is not well accomplished throughout. He has succeeded in improving upon Gershwin's original scoring, which was a little too crowded for its own good. Bennett might advantageously be permitted to rescore the whole opera, although Smallens cleared up quite a bit of it in his recent per-

formances. How many theater scores owe their success to Bennett's work it would be hard to say. In the popular field, the arranger frequently makes a trite tune something really worth hearing. As Mr. Fidanque recently said to me, the best popular musical performances are often the direct result of a clever arranger's work.

*Porgy and Bess* remains one of the best things that Gershwin left us. It is uneven in style and content, and the story has been called synthetic, but Gershwin's unusual gift for melody distinguishes it and places it in the front rank of American operas. *Porgy and Bess* has become associated with Negro performers, but it might turn out to be an interesting experience in the opera house, and prove quite as at home there as *Emperor Jones* and *Johnny spielt auf*.

Mr. Sevitzy plays the work in the manner of the symphony conductor, seemingly with fervor and relish, but his performance often lacks precision and facility. The recording is unusually good, being fortunately free of the heavy resonance noted in previous records by the Indianapolis Symphony. —P. H. R.

GERSHWIN: *Rhapsody in Blue* (3 sides); played by J. M. Sanroma (piano) and the Boston 'Pops' Orchestra, conducted by Arthur Fiedler, and *Strike Up the Band* from *Strike Up the Band* (1 side); played by the Boston 'Pops'. Victor Showpiece Set, SP 3, price \$2.25.

▲ George Gershwin is in the spotlight now, what with the forthcoming release of the movie about his life. Since that picture is called *Rhapsody in Blue*, Victor wisely re-issues its fine performance of this composition in an attractive Showpiece cover. The *Rhapsody in Blue* has come of age; it was twenty-one in February. From the beginning this work took hold of the American imagination — for every listener who professed to be shocked at its mixture of symphony and jazz, there were a hundred who were completely delighted with its Americanism.

This performance, first issued in October 1935, still remains the most satisfactory despite the fact that the jazz

spirit is less happily evidenced than in the old Whiteman version. But tonally Whiteman's band was never satisfying. Looking back to Van Norman's original review of the set we find ourselves in agreement with the statements. The piano playing of Sanroma is truly "electrifying," it is admirable for its precision and clean attack — mating, of course, similar qualities set forth by Fiedler, and it is free from the meandering effects that so many other pianists indulge in.

For all its crudities and Lisztian bombast, Van Norman rightfully says, the *Rhapsody In Blue* "was, and is still, an absolutely original and valid piece of music." Gershwin has contrived a sort of virtuoso gaiety with the sentimental contemplative character of the "blues" in this music; it requires in my estimation a spontaneity in performance which is often essayed but seldom realized. If the musicians in the Boston "Pops" cannot achieve a jazz spirit similar to that which Whiteman and his gang brought to this music, they still have much to commend in the rousing fervor and brilliance of their playing. Gershwin understandably prized this version of his most famous work in his collection of his own recorded works.

That time does not dim the best qualities of what in its day was regarded as sumptuous recording is borne out by this set.  
—P. H. R.

**KOSTELANETZ:** *Roumanian Fantasy*; played by André Kostelantz and his Orchestra. Columbia disc 7427-M, \$1.00.

▲ I assume that Kostelantz is responsible for the arrangement of this fantasy, otherwise a name would be on the record label. The melodies are well chosen and put together with a better sense of continuity than is usually encountered in this sort of thing. That some tunes, familiar already in Enesco's *Roumanian Rhapsody No. 1*, are heard here is not surprising, for Enesco drew on native material as undoubtedly Kostelantz—or whoever made this arrangement—did. This is the sort of potpourri one would hear played in Southern Europe by gypsy orchestras — the bands that are heard in

beer gardens and restaurants. Kostelantz gives this fantasy a smooth workout; he does not stress the virtuosity of some of the thematic material in the manner of the gypsy players, and one misses the fire and enthusiasm of that more earthy touch. However, the conductor achieves a tonal radiance that will probably please his many admirers. The recording is admirably realized.  
—P. H. R.

**TCHAIKOWSKY:** *Mozartiana — Suite No. 4 in G major, Opus 61*; played by the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York, direction of Arthur Rodzinski. Columbia set X or MX-248, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲ All his life, Tchaikovsky had a fervent admiration for Mozart, and so it is not surprising to find that in 1887, on the hundredth anniversary of *Don Giovanni*, Tchaikovsky wished to commemorate the occasion by an act of musical homage. Apparently the Russians of that time were not as familiar with Mozart as Tchaikovsky would have liked them to be, for we find the following note appended to his score: "A large number of the more admirable small compositions of Mozart, for incomprehensible reasons, are very little known, not alone to the public, but even to a large proportion of musicians. The author of the arrangement of the suite, having for its title *Mozartiana*, desires to give a new impulse to the study of the little masterworks which in succinct form contain incomparable beauties." The se-

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lections Tchaikowsky drew from Mozart were the piano *Gigue*, K. 574 and *Minuet*, K. 355, the motet *Ave Verum Corpus*, and the piano *Theme and Variations*, K. 455, which Mozart improvised for Gluck on a theme taken from the latter's comic opera, *Die Pilger von Mekka*.

Critics have always been divided on the merits of this work; some disdain it completely, terming it a piece of vandalism. Others feel the arrangement is worthy of Tchaikowsky, and "free from disrespect to the great classic [Mozart]". What Tchaikowsky has done is to make tone pictures out of Mozart's music. The grace and simplicity of the original piano pieces and the exquisitely ethereal beauty of the motet are altered in the elaboration of orchestral dress, and although the arrangements have been made with skill one feels they take on a needless pretentiousness. Particularly is this true in the case of *Ave Verum Corpus*. Tchaikowsky's use of the Liszt arrangement of this work for piano, with its added frills, proves less of a tribute to Mozart than it might have been had he worked from the original composition. There are those who contend that Tchaikowsky has given a novel charm and color to Mozart's works. Listeners are bound to side with one or the other of these views, so that no specific recommendation can be made. If I prefer Mozart's music in the original that does not prevent me from realizing that Tchaikowsky was motivated by laudable intentions when he wrote this work, and if he did not succeed in creating a great masterpiece he did produce an agreeable orchestral suite.

To those interested in hearing worthy recordings of Mozart's original music we recommend Musicraft discs 1051/52, which contain the *Theme and Variations* and the *Gigue and Minuet*, played by the English pianist Kathleen Long. Casadeus also plays the *Gigue and Minuet* on the last face of the set (Columbia 490) containing his performance of the *Piano Concerto in B flat*, K. 595. Columbia also has a well sung performance of the motet by the Strasbourg Cathedral Choir (disc 69488-D), and on the last face of Victor's recording of Fauré's *Requiem* (set 844) is

another version by the Disciples de Massenet of Montreal. It is my contention that the original version of the lovely *Ave Verum Corpus* is a "must" for every record collection.

Rodzinski gives this music an appreciable performance, and the recording is excellent. —P. H. R.

WAGNER: *Lobengrin—Prelude*; played by the NBC Symphony Orchestra, direction of Arturo Toscanini. Victor disc 11-8807, price \$1.00.

▲ What Toscanini does with the Prelude to *Lobengrin* has always seemed to me a miracle of sensitive artistry. He, as much as anyone I know, justified its place in the concert hall as a tone poem. The exquisite counterpoint of the opening section, that ethereal motive of the Holy Grail, is rendered with infinite attention to its delicately woven threads; inner voices which others seem to glide over are subtly and surely brought out. There is infinite poise in Toscanini's handling of this music; he builds gradually to the sweeping climax, bringing the requisite majesty and awe to our supposed vision of the grail, and in the long diminuendo that follows, the illusion of the receding host of angels winging their way back to heavenly heights is created with supreme artistry.

Back in June 1936, Toscanini's performance of this music with the Philharmonic-Symphony was released. The older recording remains a most cherishable memento of Toscanini's association with that orchestra; it was then the finest orchestra in this country. There are points in the performance here with the NBC Symphony that reveal how time and men's work have developed the art of recording; the climax, for one thing, is more thrillingly attained and the three cymbal strokes are brought out with greater realism. But as fine as this record is, it does not eclipse the earlier one; the horns and woodwinds of the old Philharmonic are more mellow in tone than those of the NBC Symphony, and the string tone has a shimmer that is not always matched here. There may be other points that make this performance preferable to the conductor;

*The American Record Guide*

one suspects it must be because otherwise one can hardly see why he made it, unless the earlier one has been or is to be withdrawn from the catalogue.

Victor has done justice to Mr. Toscanini in the recording, but in my estimation it did equal justice to him in 1936.

—P. H. R.

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### Keyboard

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CHOPIN: *Polonaise in A flat, Opus 53, No. 6*; played by José Iturbi (piano). Victor disc 11-8848, price \$1.00.

▲ In the Hollywood distortion of Chopin's life, one of the most engaging sequences was the scene in Pleyel's publishing house in Paris where Liszt plays Chopin's *A flat Polonaise* and the composer joins him at another piano. This *Polonaise*, one of the most popular recital pieces of the composer for better or worse, is used throughout the picture in connection with Chopin's Polish origin. Since all the world knows, despite the fact that Iturbi's name was not publicized on the screen, that he played the better part of the music heard in the movie, it was but natural that he would record this popular piece. Iturbi's facile technique stands him in good stead, but I, for one, do not think he catches the true Polish spirit. He more nearly gives the impression here of regarding the piece, as our English friends would say, "as a stalking horse for feats of virtuosity." The impression of a brilliant poster for Poland, in place of the glorification of a mere native dance which Chopin so adroitly achieved, is given in this performance. Admirers of Iturbi will applaud his showmanship, and a few knowalls will probably tell us that sensationalism is in order.

I find that Rubinstein's performance of this work reveals a more unerring sense of drama based on the music's flow. Moreover, Rubinstein imparts the true Polish lilt to this music, just as he does in his performances of the Mazurkas. To be sure, the question of *rubato* in Chopin remains a controversial point; some contend that Rubinstein indulges in too

much, other admire his use of it. Iturbi indulges in very little *rubato*, which may be admirable in some composers but is less so in Chopin, where forthrightness is apt to leave one with the feeling that the performer lacks true sympathy for the music. There is a lot more than hammering out chords in this composition, the *sotto voce* and *crescendo* passages in the latter part ask for an imaginative treatment such as Rubinstein brings to his performance.

The recording is tonally realistic, but the heavy chords posed a problem for the elimination of rattling on my magnetic pickup. I found the Fidelitone Master needle worked best for this. —P. H. R.

DEBUSSY: *Soirée dans Granade; Jardins sous la pluie; Reflects dans l'eau; Homage à Rameau; Poissons d'or; La plus que lente*; played by Arthur Rubinstein (piano). Victor set M-998, three disc, price \$3.50.

▲ In this set, Victor adds several firsts to its catalogue, and since all of the selections played here are among the most popular and best of Debussy's piano music, they were badly needed. Columbia still lists all but two — *Hommage à Rameau* and *La plus que lente* — played by Gieseking. European catalogues are richer, and Claudio Arrau's brilliant *Jardins sous la pluie* (Parlaphone) must be mentioned.

Rubinstein seems to be a little miscast in his present role. Essentially a romantic

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pianist, he does not, one feel, fully realize the composer's intentions. His clean and incisive style prevents him from circling blindly in an impressionistic fog, which is all to the good, but this is not enough. Significantly, *La plus que lente*, the most direct of the selections, receives the best interpretation. In the others the pedaling is too clean, the approach too logical, and one misses the perfumed quality that Gieseking captures. Rubinstein, of course, is a very dependable pianist and it cannot be said that he plays poorly. It is a pleasure to listen to his effortless interpretation, aided no end by the fine recording Victor has produced — recording far superior to Gieseking's discs. However, Debussy is not Chopin. —H. C. S.

#### A VLADIMIR HOROWITZ PROGRAM:

*Danse macabre* (Saint-Saëns-Liszt-Horowitz); *Variations on the Aria "La Ricordanza"* (Czerny); *Dumka* (Tchaikovsky); played by Vladimir Horowitz (piano). Victor set M or DM-1001, price \$3.50.

▲ The contents of this album are most impressive pianistically and about nil musically. In the *Danse macabre* some of the exploits are absolutely awesome, and, as such, of interest. As long as there are technicians like Horowitz and display pieces like the Saint-Saëns one can listen with amazement — not to the music but to what the pianist does with it. Unfortunately the other selections do not even come up to that standard. The Czerny work is neither fish nor fowl; it poses no technical problems (though it is difficult to play well) and is of little interest musically. Czerny was a friend and pupil of Beethoven, a teacher of Liszt, but the qualities of neither of these composers were in him. He is closer to Hummel, who was a decidedly second-rate composer. Czerny, however, had a flair for virtuosity, which he undoubtedly imparted to Liszt. One can listen to this piece and derive enjoyment, short-lived though it be, from the sheer beauty of Horowitz playing. The Tchaikovsky *Dumka* is of slight musical value, but like Rachmaninoff before him Horowitz makes the music

more attractive than it is; a lesser pianist would hardly have sustained our interest. Horowitz, of course, can successfully play things not many pianists will attempt, but, in my estimation, his virtuosity is wasted in this set. The recording is tonally excellent, although the percussive characteristics of the pianist, particularly in loud passages, may cause rattling in some pickups. —H. C. S.

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#### Guitar

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ALBENIZ: *Granada, Serenata* from *The Spanish Suite*; GRANADOS (arr. Segovia): *Tonadilla (La Maja de Goya)* (disc 29154); GRANADOS: *Danza Española No. 10 in G major*; ALBENIZ: *Torre Bermeja* from *Piezas Características* (disc 29155); GRANADOS (arr. Segovia): *Danza Española No. 5*; ALBENIZ (arr. Segovia): *Seville* from *The Spanish Suite* (disc 29156); played by Andres Segovia (guitar). Decca set A-384, price \$3.50.

▲ Segovia, after long years of absence from this country, returns as the supreme master of the Spanish guitar. The nuances and intricate rhythms of this music are deftly conveyed in his masterful handling of his chosen instrument. One wishes that this artist had been invited to record these selections for another company, for Decca has not done a very good job here; the recording level is far too low and Decca's surfaces do not add to one's enjoyment. A higher level of recording would have diminished the consistent hiss of the surface sounds. Yet, if one can put up with the surface sound, there is much to be said for the intimate quality of the performances; Segovia's artistry is more sensitive, less robust than the gypsy type of guitar playing, and the delicacy of his nuances is highly gratifying. The sources of Spanish music are a controversial point at best; unquestionably there are Moorish or Arabic influences, but in Albéniz, for example, there are also French and Russian influences, and Granados owed much to Liszt and German 19th-century music.

Yet, inherently, both of these composers were nationalistic, and the titles of their compositions show their wish to be regarded as such. It is good to find Segovia represented anew on records, and one can only hope that his extraordinary art will not escape the attentions of other recorders. Victor originally presented him to the record buyer; it would do well to do so again.

We have intended to call this set of records to the attention of our readers for some time, but found the set difficult to obtain, and Decca made no effort to assist us.

—P. H. R.

### Voice

**MOUSSORGSKY:** *Boris Godounoff* (sung in Italian) — *Prologue* (2 sides); *Coronation Scene* (2 sides); *Monologue of Boris* (1 side); *Clock Scene* (1 side); *Polonaise* (1 side); *Pimen's Tale — A humble monk* (1 side); *Farewell of Boris and Death Scene* (2 sides); sung by Ezio Pinza (as Boris and Pimen), the Metropolitan Opera Chorus, with orchestra, conducted by Emil Cooper. Columbia set M or MM-563, five discs, price \$5.50.

▲ Two sets of excerpts from *Boris Godounoff* within a few weeks' time, each featuring a distinguished operatic singer, both of whom have sung this role at the Metropolitan Opera, reveal the keenness of the competitive spirit existing in the American record field. Such events are often disconcerting to the record buyer, who not infrequently buys the first set available in his own locality only to find that he would have preferred the second. In all fairness to Columbia, which has obviously spent considerable time and care in the preparation and realization of this set, I think those who purchased the Victor featuring Kipnis as Boris, will not be greatly put out. For Kipnis, singing in the original Russian, is more consistently impressive than Pinza; to my way of thinking the Italian language often weakens the effect of Moussorgsky's vocal lines.

It seems a pity that these two sets were planned along similar lines, using the standard arrangement by Rimsky-Korsakoff of Moussorgsky's original. Rimsky-Korsakoff undertook to refine Moussorgsky's musical effects, which he regarded as crude and inartistic in part. In recent years Moussorgsky's original version of the opera has been printed and a study of the two scores has shown that Rimsky-Korsakoff weakened the work's dramatic strength and lessened the boldness of its tonal coloring. Kipnis once participated in a broadcast of excerpts from the original score which so impressed a number of musical writers that they have been turning all sorts of tailspins in print ever since in its favor. It is problematical, however, whether the original score could

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be presented as advantageously in the opera house as the Rimsky-Korsakoff version. In view of the fact that the latter still prevails in the theatre, it is, of course, comprehensible why the recording companies used it.

The most impelling interpretation of Boris on records, was unquestionably that of Chaliapin. His infinite variety of expression is unmatched by any other singer. Vanni-Marcoux, in his singing of the Monologue, alone achieves an artistry which for the time being dims one's memory of the incomparable Chaliapin. Others, like Baklanoff and Michail Gitowsky, who made recordings prior to the Kipnis and Pinza sets, were definitely overshadowed by Chaliapin. However, the memory of a great artist should not hinder living singers from essaying a role — in the language of the theatre, the show must go on, and record audiences want to hear others who attempt such notable parts as Boris in the opera house. Moreover, modern listeners want recordings by present-day singers; they are often not content to accept those of artists of the past no matter how great they may have been. I have pointed out previously that a listener hearing his first great operatic role, interpreted by a leading artist of his time, is disinclined to grant superiority of performance to those he has not heard, and such evidence as exists on records does not always help to alter his opinion. The loyalty of the living to the living is a good thing, particularly in art, and each succeeding generation of artists should be exploited, particularly on records.

The present set differs from Victor's in several ways — practically the complete opening scene for chorus is given; I am especially enthusiastic about the latter half of this scene and rued its omission in the Victor set. Pinza does not include *Varlaam's Song*, but gives us instead the fine monologue of the monk Pimen from the last act. The *Dialogue* between Boris and Shouisky, which gave such estimable continuity to the two big scenes of Boris in the Victor, set, is omitted here. The *Polonaise* for chorus, however, which to my way of thinking is one of the weakest parts of the opera, is included. The

omission of minor vocal parts in the present set, like Boris' son in the *Death Scene*, is regrettable; these utterances, slight as they are, lend significance to the scenes, as the Victor recording proves. Chaliapin had them included in his recordings.

Pinza sings with dignity and feeling, but unfortunately his voice is not always heard at its best. In the early scenes one feels that the music does not always lie well within the scope of his present vocal range. His best singing is heard in Pimen's monologue and in the Farewell and Death scene. In the latter, he achieves a poignant restraint which is deeply moving. Neither Kipnis nor Pinza possesses today the full vocal strength they had in former years, and this prevents them from attaining the extraordinary climatic effects of Chaliapin, who practically to the end of his days retained his unusual fullness of voice and range.

The recording here has an imposing evenness and vitality, an atmospheric quality of the theatre, which makes the choral passages especially exciting. But the singing of the Metropolitan Opera Chorus is by no means as artistic as that of the Victor Chorus, the attacks are not as clean and the voices are not as homogeneously blended. Robert Shaw, who directed the Victor Chorus, has few equals in the choral field. The orchestral direction of Emil Cooper is competent, although some of his tempos are questionable; and the orchestra does not always respond to his demands as readily as one feels it might have. Considering the difficulties attendant on the realization of such operatic scenes in a recording studio, however, Columbia deserves commendation for the result attained.

The fact that the two sets do not completely overlap will make them both attractive to many listeners. While I prefer the part of Boris sung in Russian, I do not wish to deter admirers of Pinza from purchasing his set. But that admirable portrayal of Figaro and Don Giovanni seems here, to my way of thinking, less happy in the role of Boris. —P. H. R.





BERLIN: *Always*; and KERN: *You Are Alone from Show Boat*; sung by Grace Moore (soprano), with Victor Orchestra, and Chorus in the latter, conducted by Maximilian Pilzer. Victor 10-inch, price 75c.

▲ Miss Moore joins the bandwagon of Red Seal artists recording popular songs, and does a good job. Undoubtedly this disc will appeal to a host of Miss Moore's admirers, but we dare say a few of her more discriminating friends will wish, as we did, that she had chosen other fare. The recording is good. —P. G.

NEGRO SPIRITUAL: *Were You There*; and DIX: *The Trumpeter*; sung by Richard Grooks (tenor), with Victor Orchestra, conducted by Maximilian Pilzer. Victor disc 11-8814, price \$1.00.

▲ *The Trumpeter* was a favorite song of John McCormack; those of us who heard the noted Irish tenor sing this and similar songs know how he made them seem much more than they really are. Crooks sings the song well, but his style is more reminiscent of opera than it need be.

To my way of thinking, Mr. Crooks was ill-advised to sing the Negro Spiritual *Were You There*, for he has little or no conception of its deep meaning, its moving portrayal of the Crucifixion. Marion Anderson and Roland Hayes make of this song a poignant and deeply felt experience. Mr. Crooks remains dangerously near the borderline of the opera throughout, and not once when he sings "sometimes I tremble" do we feel he had the least bit of agitation in his being. The racial feeling is requisite to this spiritual, and only a Negro singer seems able to convey the weighty meaning of the text with the needed conviction. There was one white singer, Miss Edna Thomas, who years ago made a recording of this song that was comparable to those by Negro singers in its touching simplicity and informality. The editor has this record (Columbia 1476-D), and I frequently ask him to play it for me. Miss Thomas was a Louisiana lady who specialized in Negro songs. Roland Hayes sings this spiritual without accompaniment. He claims his

great-grandfather composed it, but I have never seen it marked other than "traditional." Miss Anderson sings it to an accompaniment arranged by Burleigh, which is rich and colorful but more artistic than need be. Miss Thomas used a simpler piano arrangement. The orchestration used by Mr. Crooks is far too heavy and pretentious and quite out of place. In neither of these songs has Mr. Crooks got what I would call a good orchestration. The recording is first-rate. —P. G.

RELIGIOUS SONGS: *Nearer, My God, to Thee* (Mason) *Abide With me* (Monk); *Agnus Dei* (Bizet); *The Holy City* (Adams); *O Lord Most Holy* (*Panis Angelicus*) (Franck); *Battle Hymn of the Republic* (Steffe); sung by Jeanette MacDonald (soprano), with Victor Orchestra, and Chorus (in part), conducted by Maximilian Pilzer. Victor set M-996, three 10-inch discs, price \$2.75.

▲ Religious songs are extremely popular with soldiers in Army camps and in the scattered battle zones. Miss MacDonald has sung these songs for the boys in her tours of the camps and many requests for her rendition of these old favorites on records prompted the release of this album. She sings them all with simple dignity; there is an air of informality and improvisation about her performances

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which is commendable. Very likely, many hearing these records will spontaneously join her in singing them. The orchestral direction of Mr. Pilzer proves adequate, and the recording satisfactory. —P. G.

SCHUBERT: *Ave Maria* (in Latin); and SHANNON: *That's an Irish Lullaby* from *Going My Way*; sung by Rise Stevens (mezzo-soprano), with orchestra conducted by Sylvan Shulman. Columbia disc 7425-M, price \$1.00.

▲ Schubert's setting of *Ave Maria* was never intended to be sung to a Latin text; the words used by the composer were a translation from Sir Walter Scott, and the English text is greatly preferable to the alien Latin text if one does not care to sing in German. Miss Stevens fails to impress us here, her singing lacks essential warmth, and she conveys none of the feeling of intensification in the second verse which make Dorothy Maynor's voicing of this prayer so much more admirable. Moreover, the orchestral background is not good; this song should be sung to a piano accompaniment.

As to the Shannon song, Miss Stevens' tendency to drag the chorus is hardly praiseworthy; there's enough sentimentality here without adding to it. —P. G.

VILLA-LOBOS: *Serestas* (Brazilian Serenades)—*Modinha* (Love Song); *Abril* (April); *Na paz Do Outono* (In the Peace of Autumn); *Canção do Carreiro* (Song of the Ox-Cart Driver); *Desejo* (Desire); and *Sino de Aldeia* (The Village Bell) (*Miniatura* No. 6); sung by Jennie Tourel, mezzo-soprano, with Orchestra conducted by Heitor Villa-Lobos. Columbia set X-249, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲ The important thing about this set is the voice and artistry of Jennie Tourel. She is a singularly gifted singer of songs, with a voice that is warm in timbre and produced with considerable flexibility. She has a gift for languages and is said to be at home in half-a-dozen tongues. Of Russian extraction, Miss Tourel was born in Paris, and educated in France and Switzerland. There is much of the Slavic dark-

ness of tone in her voice; a rich plangency which supplies an appealing quality. Her tendency however, to cover her tones, consistently, to accentuate the darkness of her voice, is not always of advantage to her diction. But her musicianship is extraordinary in these days of poorly trained singers.

Villa-Lobos is regarded by some as a South-American wonder, and Brazil's musical ambassador. Undeniably a singularly gifted composer, he seems almost too eclectic for his own good. One suspects the range of his ideals has defeated his workmanship, for there is seldom the meticulous craftsmanship characteristic of a self-critical composer. His mixture of European and primitive styles, the latter derived from a study of the folk music of his native Brazil, often reveals an ingenuousness which is both entertaining and effective. This quality is present in these Serenades, where the motivation was undoubtedly applied by the French Impressionistic school and the materials in part by his knowledge of native Brazilian music. Villa-Lobos wrote his 12 serenades, from which five songs here are drawn, in Paris in the middle twenties; the last song is the final one of a group of six written in his own country in 1916-17.

One might call these songs mood pieces, for the composer strives to symbolize in sound the impressions set forth in the poems. Some of his effects are very striking; others, like the effect of the rain at the opening of *April*, tend toward dramatic exaggeration. There is in his dramatic writing the calculation of the virtuosos, which can be singularly successful when well done, as it is here by Miss Tourel and the composer. The vocal writing on the whole is well contrived; most of the effects lie in the orchestra, which seems upon occasion an almost too pretentious medium. But Villa-Lobos scores tellingly and his tonal coloration is always zestful. The *Love Song* and *Song of the Ox-Cart Driver* will immediately impress. The latter is especially well sung by Miss Tourel.

Columbia has given good recording to the singer and the composer—a reproduction well balanced. —P. H. R.

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115 Reed Ave.

Pelham 65, N. Y.

JULY, 1945

Vol. XXXI, No. 3

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